



DOWNTOWN Parks *and* Open Spaces

a community discussion

June 2012



PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

This project was administered by the City of Morgan Hill Community Services Department, and facilitated by the City Design Collective, in collaboration with Catherine Chang Design Studio



community vision + urban design

in collaboration with

CATHERINE CHANG DESIGN STUDIO

landscape architecture

Special thanks are offered to members of the Morgan Hill community who offered invaluable input during the public planning process.

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

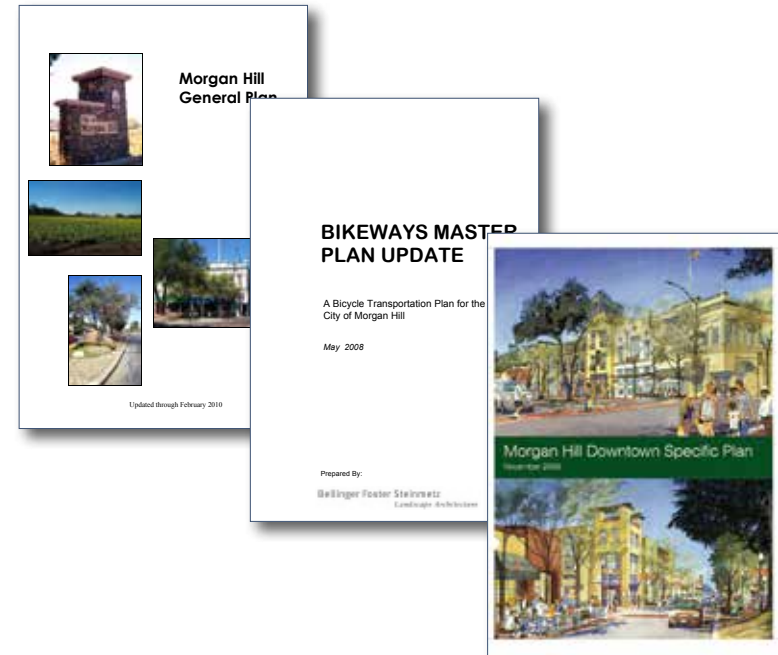
Overview

In the Spring of 2012, members of the Morgan Hill community participated in two interactive public workshops with the explicit goal of envisioning future public parks and open spaces in the Downtown District. This document provides a visual and written record of the community's discussions, and contains recommendations for future improvements to support pedestrian activity, enhance connections, and strengthen publicly accessible open spaces throughout Downtown. The strategies presented herein are provided to form the foundation for future implementing actions.

Recent Efforts

This is an exciting time in the evolution of Morgan Hill. Located along Highway 101 along the spine of the highly desirable and rapidly changing Santa Clara Valley, Morgan Hill's community has managed to preserve its cherished small-town character and vast open spaces, while strategically accommodating growth and making efforts to revitalize the Downtown.

As Morgan Hill continues to evolve, the community has taken great strides to establish a comprehensive network of public open spaces that support pedestrian activity, expand opportunities for recreation, reduce dependency on the automobile (and associated greenhouse gases), increase health and vitality, and provide Morgan Hill's residents and visitors with civic amenities that significantly contribute to their high quality of life. Past efforts including the Bikeways and Trails Master Plan; the Parks, Facilities, and Recreation Master Plan; and the Downtown Specific Plan have created significant improvements to pedestrian-friendly aspects of the built environment.



"A comprehensive system of high-quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs that meet the existing and future needs of the community, enhance partnerships, contribute to the City's scenic quality, identity and livability, and are sustained over time."

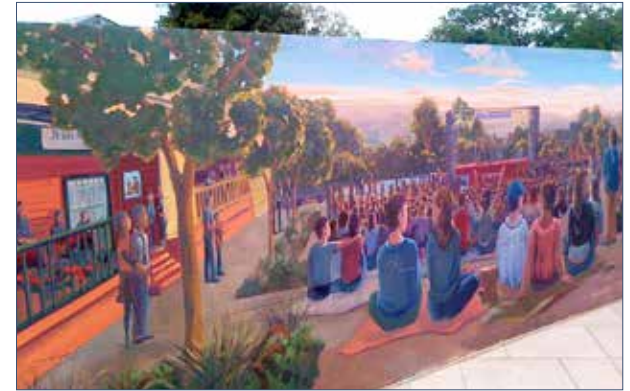
- Goal: Parks, Facilities, and Recreation Programming Master Plan



The Morgan Hill Community and Cultural Center provides a significant hub for residents and visitors of all ages at the southern gateway to Downtown.



The redevelopment of Third Street creates a multi-purpose streetscape, park and pedestrian plaza linking Monterey Road with Depot Street and sets the stage for desired transit proximate development.



Public art is a key component of the Third Street redevelopment project and showcases local and regional culture.

Multipurpose trail and Linear Park along Butterfield Boulevard enhances connectivity between Downtown and adjacent residential and mixed use neighborhoods in support of the community's vision for distinct walkable neighborhoods.



East of Depot Street, the Courthouse Plaza improvements created an attractive and drought tolerant landscape connecting the Morgan Hill Courthouse to the pedestrian railroad crossing and by extension to the heart of Downtown.



Enhancements to the Transit Depot and surrounding area support pedestrian activity and provide community amenities where they are accessible to residents and visitors.



INTRODUCTION

Project Area Map



STUDY AREA ~ For the purposes of this effort, the Downtown district is defined as the areas extending between Main Avenue to the north, and Dunne Avenue to the south; Butterfield Boulevard forms the eastern project boundary, and the western edge is defined by Del Monte Avenue and the accessible edge of Nob Hill.



PUBLIC PROCESS

Parks and Recreation Commission Subcommittee

Public Workshop 1

Public Workshop 2

Overview

The workshop process began with a kick-off meeting during which the consultant team met with members of the community services staff and a subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC), and included a subsequent Advisory meeting with staff, two public workshops, an online survey, and presentations to the PRC and the City Council.

Kick-off Meeting with PRC Subcommittee

On February 17th, the consultant team met with the city's project manager and PRC Subcommittee to refine project goals and to strategize the first public workshop. A discussion of past and on-going planning efforts preceded a discussion of goals and desired outcomes. Key points of discussion that served as the foundation for the workshop are listed below.

- The Morgan Hill community is focused on establishing a Linear Park along the upper Llagas Creek corridor through Downtown. Past planning efforts including the Downtown Specific Plan identify potential project alignments. However, due to right-of-way constraints and on-going analyses related to potential flood control mitigation, it is unclear at this time as to whether it will be possible to establish a linear park along the community's preferred route.
- Members of the Morgan Hill community have expressed a desire to increase amenities for both seniors and children throughout Downtown.
- The redevelopment of Third Street east of Monterey Road provides a flexible outdoor environment for community gatherings such as farmer's markets and outdoor entertainment. Some community members have expressed a desire that future projects embrace a more bucolic character in keeping with Morgan Hill's rich history.
- This project shall be entitled "Downtown Parks and Open Spaces - A Community Discussion" to indicate its broadened role as an opportunity for both residents and stakeholders to express their vision for a wide range of potential parks and open space types.



Prior to the first workshop, the consultant team met with members of City Staff from a range of departments to review the intended approach to the public workshops. In light of on-going planning efforts regarding the Llagas Creek corridor, it was decided that the Downtown Parks and Open Spaces planning effort should encourage additional input regarding the proposed Linear Park, and should assist the community to envision alternative projects that enhance pedestrian access to nature and increase city-wide linkages as part of a broader discussion.

A majority of the West Third Street parcel will be needed to accommodate the PL566 flood control project improvements. Prior to that time, the parcel should be used as passive open space with on-street parking. When the PL566 project is implemented, this parcel could become a passive pocket park and pedestrian amenity with a strong connection to the creek improvements, perhaps with interpretive signage about the PL566 Upper Llagas project purposes of flood control and riparian habitat.

Note:

[illegible]

DOWNTOWN 6 Parks *and* Open Spaces

PUBLIC PROCESS

Community Workshop 1

Overview

The first community workshop was intended to provide participants with an opportunity to describe their personal vision for additional parks and open spaces in Downtown. A brief presentation by the consultant team highlighted past efforts, and described a number of ways that new parks and open spaces could be established as part of future public efforts (capita I improvements), as part of private development, and/or as part of joint public and private efforts.

Following the presentation, workshop participants worked independently to identify key locations for new parks and open spaces in Downtown, illustrating their vision on individual worksheets. Subsequent roundtable discussions provided a forum for all participants to discuss their ideas with fellow residents and stakeholders, and to forge consensus for a series of site-specific and district wide recommendations.



Workshop participants recorded comments and illustrated their vision on individual worksheets.



Key Points of Discussion

The following suggestions were generated by workshop participants and had broad support.

1. Create open spaces in Downtown that support family activities. Create opportunities for children play areas and educational opportunities throughout Downtown.
2. Enhance walkability along Monterey Road to strengthen the pedestrian connection between the Community Center and Third Street. Locate additional trees along the median and sidewalk areas to provide additional shade and pedestrian comfort.
3. Connect the city's multiuse trails to Downtown to enhance connections with residential neighborhoods, and to provide safe pathways for children who wish to walk and bicycle to Downtown. Specifically, establish safe linkages between the Butterfield Boulevard multiuse trail and Downtown.
4. Create attractive outdoor spaces for downtown residents as part of new residential and mixed-use development within Downtown.
5. Establish public park spaces along the Llagas Creek corridor. Provide pedestrian and bicycle access to creek access points.
6. Explore opportunities to create pedestrian amenities such as parks and creekside trails on parcels owned by the Santa Clara Valley Water District as part of future flood control planning efforts.
7. Develop new parks and open spaces on city-owned parcels in Downtown; assess the potential to re-purposing under-utilized surface parking areas along Depot Street.
8. Work with landowners to create public amenity on under-utilized and vacant parcels.
9. Ensure that all parks and open spaces are comprised of native and drought tolerant plants.

City-Owned Opportunity Site 1

Background
The City owns the land located east of Depot Street between 3rd and 4th Streets. Currently a surface parking lot, the City is interested in planning for a future condition in which part of this site might be developed as a public park or open space.

What type of park or open space would best serve the community at this location? What would you like to see here?



City-Owned Opportunity Site 2

Background
The City owns this parcel located on West 3rd Street along the Llagas Creek corridor.

What type of park or open space would best serve the community at this location? What would you like to see here?



PUBLIC PROCESS

Community Workshop 2

Overview

The second community workshop created a forum for workshop participants to prepare preliminary design concepts for a new publicly accessible park on the city-owned property located along West 3rd Street. The recommendation to restructure the space as a family-friendly peaceful environment where residents and visitors can gain access to Llagas Creek was unanimously supported by workshop participants, and grows from the community's long term goals as stated in the General Plan, Parks and Recreation Masterplan, and Downtown Specific Plan.

Project Site

Located along the north side of West 3rd Street, the city-owned parcel is bordered to the west and north by single-family homes and to the east by commercial properties. Upper Llagas Creek enters the site at the northwest corner on lands currently owned by the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and follows near to the north and eastern parcel boundary, before exiting to the south, beneath the 3rd Street Bridge. Both the Water District parcel and the project site fall within the 'Preliminary Alignment of the Upper Llagas Creek Flood Protection Project'





Site Visit

Workshop participants joined members of Staff and the Consultant team to perform a site analysis, paying special attention to the site's natural features, relationship to surrounding streets and properties, and possible locations to enhance access and views of Llagas Creek. Participants recorded their vision and identified issues and opportunities on individual worksheets.

Worktable Participants	Design Ideas & Key Points of Discussion	

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Downtown Parks and Open Spaces
City of Morgan Hill

Community Workshop 2
 March 8, 2012





Workshop Discussion

Participants reconvened at the Community and Cultural Center where the Consultant Team presented a brief series of images of similarly sized 'pocket parks' in other cities. Following the presentation, participants summarized their field observations, and shared with one another their sense of opportunities and constraints, and overall vision for future design features,

Key Points of Discussion

1. Create a beautiful park space that embraces the site's natural and bucolic setting. Do not 'over-program' the site; enhance the site's natural features.
2. Establish a pathway through the park that provides access to Llagas Creek where possible.
3. Celebrate the central large oak tree by clearing the understory, removing damaged limbs, and providing seating beneath its canopy.
4. Clearly denote and distinguish the vehicle parking area; ensure that vehicles can not enter the site's interior.
5. Link the park to a greater pathway system along the Llagas Creek corridor. Extend the multipurpose trail northbound along the creek to 2nd Street, and southbound across 3rd street towards Nob Hill.





District-Wide Strategies

The following strategies describe possible design interventions and solutions customized to advance the community's stated preference for additional parks and open spaces in Downtown. Each strategy is described in context of a specific location, however, design principles should be considered for application throughout Downtown.



Strategies

- 1 Pre-Vitalize Underutilized Parcels and Parking
- 2 Create a Butterfield Boulevard Pedestrian Crossing
- 3 Enable Parklets throughout Downtown

1 Pre-Vitalize Underutilized Parking and Parcels

Existing Condition: Underutilized parcels and parking lots.



Strategy: Enable temporary park spaces, community gardens and food markets to add vitality and pedestrian amenity to vacant and underutilized property prior to new investment. Below left: Vacant parcel as community garden, Benicia, CA. Below Right: Parking lot to Park, Miami, FL.



2

Create a Butterfield Boulevard Pedestrian Crossing

Existing Condition: Multipurpose trail along east side of Boulevard lacks direct connection to Downtown.



Strategy: Establish midblock crosswalk(s). Utilize raised or textured paving, planted median, and lighting to enhance safety and encourage pedestrian use.



3

Enable Parklets throughout Downtown

Existing Condition: Parallel parking spaces adjacent to storefronts containing retail and restaurants.



Strategy: Permit business to utilize parking spaces for publicly accessible outdoor seating and display of goods.



Llagas Creek Park Design Concept

Overview

The following design concept for the West 3rd Street Project Site is based on input received from the community during the two public workshops and the online survey. Due to the project site's limited size, and the fact that some design ideas are mutually exclusive, it was not possible to incorporate each and every recommendation into a single concept. For this reason, the following design concept is intended to illustrate one possible organization of open space, access and circulation, and key design features.



Llagas Creek Park Project Site - Existing Conditions



Key Design Features Having Broad Community Support

- 1 Grassy open space for picnics and passive recreation.
- 2 Multipurpose path connects to parcels south of 3rd Street and north of 2nd Street.
- 3 Parking area enclosed by post and rail fence distinguishes auto and pedestrian areas.
- 4 Natural meadow including trails to Llagas Creek.
- 5 Llagas Creek access points.

Llagas Creek Park - Design Concept



The Vision for Llagas Creek Park



Pedestrian access to Llagas Creek will be provided where disturbance to plant materials and stream banks can be minimized. Creating opportunities to enhance safe access to the creek for community members was considered a top priority by workshop participants.



In its current state, the parking area is not well defined, resulting in conditions that compromise the quality of the park experience for both residents and visitors. The community concept defines automobile and pedestrian access areas using streetscape and landscape design techniques that embrace local character.







APPENDIX

Community Workshop Comments
Public Survey Results (tbd)

Summary of Online Survey Results

In addition to the two Community Workshops, the City created an online survey to provide additional opportunities for residents to express their visions for new parks and open spaces in Downtown.

The survey received over 300 respondents. The following comments are provided as a representative sample of common themes expressed by survey participants. A comprehensive list of the survey responses is available at the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Major Themes

- 1 Emphasize Natural and Water Elements
- 2 Provide spaces for Families, Young Adults, and Seniors
- 3 Encourage Downtown Gathering Spots
- 4 Enhance Park Facilities and Pathways

Representative Answers

QUESTION 1: 229 Responses

How do you currently use existing parks and open spaces downtown? How are they limited? How would you expand their role?

Many residents use the existing park spaces for special events or single-use activities.

- “I use Dog park almost every day. I also love the Farmer’s Market.”
- “We attend festivals and public gatherings downtown as well as take an after dinner stroll when the weather is nice after eating in a downtown restaurant.”
- “We visit Community Park for summer events such as 4th of July or softball tournaments, occasionally the tennis courts as well.”

However, facilities and awareness are lacking in certain areas...

- “Downtown Morgan Hill is not a place I often choose to hang out. Its a shame because Morgan Hill has so much potential...”
- “I don’t currently use downtown parks. I was not aware of any downtown parks.”
- “Sometimes I meet with friends and their kids for play-dates. Most are limited because they do not have restrooms.”

QUESTION 2: 180 Responses

Please describe new types of parks and open spaces that you would like to see to serve the following community members: a) Yourself and your family; b) Seniors and children; c) Downtown business customers and employees; d)Visitors

Residents expressed a strong desire for both active and passive open spaces.

- “Could we have open spaces with water (pond, lake, etc.) incorporating walking trails? It would be nice to have all of our parks linked via trails.”
- “What about sit around park with benches and lots of shade and green grass, but ALSO sports oriented park with sand volleyball courts and bocce.”
- “More parks with BBQ facilities and tables would be helpful for all the above categories...”

Residents also mentioned that parks should be welcoming to all users.

- “A park with several elements that offer benefit for *many* - a tennis court, basketball court, swings/gym for the kids, open area for rec, trees for shade during lunch, etc.”
- “Consider generational use. Great-grandparents hanging out with toddlers and teenagers. We need the access to be usable regardless of mobility.”

QUESTION #3: 158 Responses

Based on the community's long term vision for Downtown, what types of parks and open spaces do you think would help attract and support existing business and desired new investment?

Residents repeatedly mentioned the possible synergy between businesses (such as cafes, shops, and restaurants) and outdoor spaces.

- "A place where you could buy a cup of coffee and watch your kids play or get some food and sit in the park and eat; that kind of thing."
- "I think a mix of courtyard-like parks in the midst of rows of stores and shops would help. A place to gather the family."
- "Any ideas for expanding more open pedestrian walkways in the downtown area seems like a nice idea to me. Park a block or two away and walk throughout the downtown area!"
- I prefer the idea of doing the more trendy outdoor seating behind the buildings on the east side of Monterey.

QUESTION #4:

Several themes emerged from the feedback received during the two community workshops regarding the look, feel and function of downtown parks. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Community responses coalesced around four main topics:

1

NATURE & WATER

"A long, linear, park that would follow a creek and be accessible from multiple points along its route would provide an attractive downtown feature that would providing walking access to and from downtown businesses."

2

FACILITIES AND PATHWAYS

"Benches to relax and talk with friends."
"Need park areas with more picnic tables with natural shade, planted trees, for gathering and eating near retail shops and parking areas."

3

GATHERING SPOTS

"Outdoor seating at cafes overlooking the park. Lots of lighting in the evening. Safe. A play area for kids. Bike path. Lots and lots of shaded seating for our hot days."
"How about an outdoor movie series during the short three month of summer?"

4

FAMILIES AND YOUNG ADULTS

"A park with fountains that children (young and old) can run in and play with during the hot Morgan Hill summers."
"Let's make downtown the place that young adults want to spend their time and money"

Additional Areas of Consensus

Over 80% of respondents agreed future open space should emphasize natural features.

***Creekside Paths
Shade Trees
Fountains***

Over 80% of respondents agreed future open space should be designed with families in mind.

***Benches
Playgrounds***

Over half of respondents STRONGLY agreed that future open spaces should include gathering spots to draw people downtown.

***Outdoor Concerts
Barbecues and Picnic Tables***

Nearly 90% of respondents agreed that future parks should create increased opportunities to walk to and from downtown.

***Linear Parks
Cafe Seating***